

98-10-02a Colossians

Let's prepare ourselves to study God's Word tonight by going to the Lord in prayer. Father, we thank you for this day. We thank you for your sustaining grace.

We thank you for the privilege of gathering with fellow believers to be nourished up in the truth of your Word and to have our perspective and our viewpoint of life restored and brought more in line with your plan and your purpose. We pray that God the Holy Spirit will give us insight and understanding. We pray that these things that we see in your Word tonight will be more than just concepts that we understand academically, but they will be things that transform us and renew us to accomplish your purpose.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. We resume tonight our study of Colossians at a very fascinating point.

Paul has just stated the purpose of the Christian life. In chapter 1, verse 24, where we resume tonight, he says, I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ for the sake of his body, which is the church. We've talked about the fact that the apostles were unique representatives of Jesus Christ.

Those 12 men, the 11 that accompanied Jesus and Paul, were unique in this capacity of fulfilling in their flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ. This sounds on the surface like, well, there was something lacking in Christ's suffering. I thought his suffering was complete and perfect on our behalf, and of course it was.

But in the role that Jesus commissioned the 12 apostles for, they were eyewitnesses. They had a unique opportunity to represent Jesus Christ and to begin the outward spread of the gospel from Judea and Jerusalem to Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth. The church, in fact, is built on the foundation of the apostles.

Paul talks about that foundation in Corinthians when he says, I have laid a foundation. There's no other foundation you can lay except Jesus Christ. He says, I've laid a foundation and another man builds on it, but let each man be careful how he builds.

So the men who come after the apostles, they're the builders. The foundation of Jesus Christ has been laid. It was laid by Christ himself and by those 12 apostles.

They had a unique ministry and they had a unique function as a part of their apostolic office, part of which was suffering as Christ himself suffered in terms of, not of course on the cross, but in terms of affliction, persecution, the resistance to the message that they brought that was the message of Christ himself. So, for example, in Ephesians chapter 3 and verse 13, Paul says, therefore I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. My suffering for you is your glory.

This is something an apostle can say that one of us wouldn't say to the rest of us. I wouldn't say, well, my sufferings are a glory to you. You can tell that there's something unique about the apostles and their role.

You find this same idea in Acts chapter 9 and verse 16. The apostle Paul suffered imprisonment. If you look at Colossians chapter 4, which we will reach eventually, in verse 10 Paul says, Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, greets you with Mark, the cousin of Barnabas.

He talks about being a fellow prisoner. They're in prison. Paul is in prison when he writes this and he's in prison specifically because he's preaching the gospel.

Very few of us historically in the church have been imprisoned for our faith. There have been phases in history where this might have taken place, but it was unique really to the apostles. In verse 18 of that same chapter, Paul says, this salutation is by my own hand.

And the word Paul is there. Apparently the original has his autograph there. He says, remember my chains.

And again, reflecting that idea. So to share the suffering of Christ the way the apostles did was something unique. Remember when Paul was on the Damascus road and everybody fell down and they heard a thunder.

Everyone else heard thunder, but Paul heard the voice of the Lord. And what did the Lord say? Well, what had Saul been doing? He had been out persecuting Christians, imprisoning them, having them executed and so forth. And Jesus said, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? So the sufferings of the church are the sufferings of Christ.

Jesus says to him, why are you persecuting me? When it is in fact his body, the church. So Jesus had warned the apostles ahead of time that they would be persecuted by all men for his sake. In Mark chapter 13 and verse 13, he told them ahead of time.

You will be hated, you will be persecuted, you will be imprisoned, you will stand before kings and courts for me. And he was talking specifically at that point to the eleven. The same idea is expressed by Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 1 and verse 5. Where he says the sufferings of Christ have overflowed to us.

So there are many other passages I could give you in this regard. Paul talks about the fellowship of Christ's sufferings in Philippians chapter 3 and verse 10. But this is what he is alluding to in Colossians when he says, I rejoice in my sufferings for you.

And fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ. For the sake of his body, which is the church, of which I became a minister. A servant, someone who fills a need.

Someone who brings the food to the table, who brings clothing or whatever. According to the

stewardship from God which was given to me for you. There have been twelve of these stewardships given by God and that is to the apostles.

And so this ministry is received directly from Jesus Christ. He was personally chosen and called to be an apostle by Jesus Christ. And this fulfills the word of God at the end of verse 25.

So now in Colossians 1.26 Paul says this commission, this stewardship that he has for the church. His calling is to communicate the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations. But now has been revealed to his saints.

To them, to the saints, verse 27, God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles. There are a lot of words here and we tend to sort of get lost in the fog when word upon word piles up talking about theology. But what Paul says here is there is a new calling.

There is a new way of life that God has revealed in this age specifically through Christ and through his apostles. It wasn't revealed in former times. It's not Old Testament living.

It's not join Israel and get with the sacrifices and the dietary laws. This is a new thing. Never been seen before.

It applies specifically to this age. Paul is the apostle specifically designated to reveal this new part of the plan of God to us. Who are not Jewish and who don't have any interest in becoming Israelites.

He's the man we go to to get this information and that's why we have so many of his books preserved in the New Testament. He says it's God's will to make known to the Gentiles the riches of the glory of this mystery. And this is what it is.

This is the whole point of our life. Being a believer all boils down to this right here. Christ in you.

The hope of glory. What I find very surprising about this is I work on these passages. I translate them and I do concordance studies and topical studies and chain reference studies and I look at commentaries and so forth.

When I check the commentaries to see if I had missed anything or if there was an idea there that would be fruitful. It's very surprising that commentary after commentary when you get to this. I think this is one of the high points of the book.

He builds up to it in about four verses. He builds up to it in about eight lessons. They just kind of gloss right over it.

They don't give it any real special treatment. Less than a page in one commentary I've got. Less than half a page in another commentary and then they just go right on.

And I think am I off the mark here in thinking that this is a really important thing that he's saying. The mystery that God waited all of these centuries to reveal is Christ in you. Moses did not have Christ in you.

David, Abraham, Daniel, John the Baptist. None of them had or had the hope of Christ in you. It's unique to this age.

God waited all this time and got a special group of men together to reveal this truth. And sent the Apostle Paul probably the greatest Christian, the greatest teacher, the greatest theologian in centuries of human history. He sent him with this message to us.

And then people just kind of blow right by it. When you go to church, how much do we hear about Christ in you? What do we know about Christ in us? What is that? I asked this question last week. Is it the sensation that there's somebody else living in there? You've got another presence? Is it something people that have experienced demon possession have felt another personality or another presence inside there? Is it that sort of thing, only positive? What exactly does it mean, Christ in you? And why is it the hope of glory? It's what we want to concentrate on tonight.

And we're going to find our answers in the scriptures. Obviously the commentaries were no help on this. And we don't really need them because the Bible has a lot to say about Christ in you.

I mentioned at the end of the lesson last week that we're going to see two primary aspects of this that help us understand it. We want to first of all remind ourselves of where Jesus Christ personally is at this moment. They used to, a long time ago on TV, they would say, it's 9 o'clock.

Do you know where your children are? Well, I could say it's 8 o'clock. Do you know where your Savior is? Do you know where Jesus Christ is right now? There is a sense in His divinity in which He's omnipresent just like God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. But like God the Father who has localized the manifestation of His presence and His being in the throne room of the third heaven.

And we know that God the Holy Spirit localizes Himself in each one of us when we are believers. Jesus Christ as a human being, a resurrected human being, the first born from the dead as we saw earlier in this chapter. His physical body is located in one place right now.

And Scripture tells us a couple of different places where that is. If we had a little quiz question right now, would you be able to answer where that is? Well, we know that He is seated at the right hand of the Father. We know this from Ephesians chapter 1. We also know this from Hebrews.

But in both of those locations, in Ephesians chapter 1, we know that Christ was raised from the dead. And as a result, He enables us to enjoy that same life. So that in Ephesians chapter 1 verse 15, Paul reviewing his commission says, I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus

and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, so that you may know.

Once again, what is Paul's mission? What is his commission? What is his stewardship? It's for us to know who we are and why we're here in God's plan. And what does that consist of? He wants to give us the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the full knowledge of Him. This is not an ethereal kind of a thing.

It's knowledge. It's understanding. It's perspective.

So that we may know four things. Number one, what is the hope of His calling? That's the same thing he's addressing in Colossians chapter 1. Christ in you, the hope of glory. That's the hope of His calling.

That's the first thing we need to come to an understanding of. What is our hope? What is our reason for living? What's our future expectation? What motivates us when the chips are down? I'll come back to that idea of motivation here in a moment. The second thing in Ephesians 1.18, to know what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

Christ in you, the hope of glory. The glory of His inheritance in the saints. Third, what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe? We often recognize God, but we don't recognize His power.

We recognize God, but we don't understand His power. There are lots of people, I inflicted a television program on myself last night or the night before. One of these Holy Ghost, spirit filled revival, whack them in the head, knock them down type of things.

Complete misunderstanding of the power of God. The power of God isn't there to charge your emotional batteries. It isn't there to raise you up on a swell of music and cheering and stomping and clapping and someone who can whip a crowd into a fever pitch with their rhetoric.

The power of God is practical. You remember when Elijah was up and God came by in a whirlwind, but it said God wasn't in the whirlwind. There was a great raging fire and so forth and God wasn't in that.

The power of God was in the still small voice. People miss the still small voice in the roar of the crowds and the clapping and so forth, but there is a power of God and we need to understand it. It's a part of our hope.

It's a part of our glory. It's a part of Paul's commission as an apostle to explain to us the plan and purpose of God and part of that is to come to understand the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe. Everyone is looking for power.

We want answers. We want solutions. We want resolution.

The big buzz word now is we want closure. Something happens and we want closure. Well, the only power in the universe that can accomplish lasting things, meaningful things and permanent things is the power of God.

That's a part of our hope. It's a part of Christ in you and we need to come to an understanding of it. This power is the same power that God worked in Christ, this is Ephesians 1.20, when He raised Him from the dead.

Think about how much power it takes. And with all of the human genome project and all of the cloning and all of the scientific experiments and Frankenstein in his lab sewing parts together and so forth, nobody has ever figured out how to raise the dead. But once someone dies, their body begins to decay and there isn't a way in the world of reversing that process.

There isn't a way in the world of reuniting the soul, bringing that personality and the lifetime of experiences and so forth all back together and causing that person to live and breathe and move among us anymore. And there never will be. There's only one power that can do that and it's the power of God.

God has already accomplished it and He's got that same power, that level of power that's beyond human imagination and human understanding or human imitation. That same power is available and God wants to employ it on our behalf. Paul says, I am here to help you understand the exceeding greatness of His power toward us.

But there's a description of us. It's toward us who believe. That power isn't going to come and be effective in our lives unless we believe.

It is available through faith. So that tells us we want to be sure and understand faith and be sure that we qualify and that we know where and how to receive the grace of God in that way, His great power. This is the power He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places.

Far above all principality and power and might and dominion. Why does He say that? We tend to think, well that's angels. He raised Him up and seated Him up above the angels.

But Paul uses all of these words for authority and power because this is where people typically turn. If I need an answer to my property tax problem, if I need an answer to the problem with my neighbor or the problem with my lawsuit or the problem with my economic situation or the problem with my finances, I'm going to go to whoever's got the power. I want to go to the authority or to the ruler or to whoever's got that.

God took Jesus Christ and with His power raised Him from the dead and raised Him up above

every other power. So if you're interested in finding where the power is and where the answers are, well go to the top. Go to where the power really is, the lasting eternal divine power of God.

Don't wear yourself out going to intermediaries that don't have the power. We want human solutions and we go to human sources to get them. And we miss the opportunity to develop our relationship with God.

Christ has been raised far above principalities, powers, mights, dominions, every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. You can achieve the greatest coup in the world. You can pull off the big deal and be financially secure.

You can win the lottery. You can catch the 70th home run baseball, whatever it might be, and think you've got the world by the tail. But that's all you've got is the world.

And the world is coming to an end. You can catch the 70th, I saw that guy, that's why I'm thinking about that. I saw him on TV, they're asking him what's he going to do.

Is he going to sell it or donate it or what? And it's worth millions of dollars. That one baseball, being there and catching that baseball, he's instantly got something that's worth seven figures. And people think, oh I wish that was me.

I wish I'd have been out there in left field with my baseball glove. But the problem is his heart could stop tonight. And that baseball will be among his personal effects that his heirs in the signs wrestle over.

The parable that Jesus told about the rich man who was planting his houses in his barns and God comes to him, this night your soul is required of you. The great thing about the power of God when we learn to think about God's plan and God's purpose and be operating in God's power is it goes past death. God's got the power to raise us up after death.

God gives us life after death. God gives us things in this life that we take with us. They always say you can't take it with you, but the things of God you can take with you.

Every scrap of biblical knowledge that you have ever acquired is going right forward into eternity and we're going to be so glad we have it when we see Jesus Christ face to face. It's a sad thing, but there are many believers who are going to have tears in their eyes. There are many believers who are going to be afraid of Jesus Christ.

They won't understand Him. They won't know Him. He's going to be a frightful sight and they're going to be comfortable over on the other side of the planet.

They're going to say, you know, I really don't mind living in Tibet because it just scares me being near the Savior because they don't know Him. They don't know His purpose. They don't know His plan.

They don't know His goals for us. You know what it's like if you move to a new place or when I was little we moved around some and I went to new schools and I went to a new classroom. You don't know any of the faces.

You don't know the teacher. You get there in the middle of the year and you don't know what they've done or what they're about to do. It's very bewildering and it's very uncomfortable to not have any idea and of trying to figure out how to acclimatize yourself.

What an awful thing to be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ and here He returns with ten thousand of His saints and you feel like you're in the middle of a strange class. You don't know what happened to the people you left behind. What's going to happen in the future? What's the purpose of Jesus Christ? What's that blood all over His white robe? What's He doing with that big sword? Why are there thousands of people suddenly dying on the earth and so forth? It's just going to be completely befuddling to people who ought to know better who have been bought by the blood of Jesus Christ who belong to Him who have been commissioned and called by Him just as He called the Apostle Paul to know His plan and to understand His purpose.

That's why Paul wrote these scriptures under the ministry of God the Holy Spirit so that we are not ashamed on the day of His coming. Many of us will be. But our purpose as we meet tonight is to not be in that crowd to at least have a vague idea and have some inkling of where we are and what's happening.

But Jesus Christ has been raised above all other powers, all other authorities and He is above every name that is named not only in this age but He is above everything. What a great thing to know Him. What a great thing to belong to Him and to be secure in Him.

To know that whatever happens life, death, catastrophe the dissolving of governments the overthrowing of economies depressions or great prosperity and complete oblivion when it comes to spiritual things. People get so prosperous they don't care anything about God. Whatever befalls us we know that we have a future in Christ because His name is above every name in this age and in the age to come.

God has put all things under His feet and given Him to be head over all things to the church which is His body. The fullness of Him who fills all in all. Christ in you we have that potential because we are in the church and it's a part of God's plan.

So this tells us in verse 20 if you missed it you can go back in verse 20 God worked these things in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him where? At His right hand. You have this same information communicated in Hebrews chapter 8 in verse 1. Hebrews chapter 8 I personally suspect that Paul wrote this although I can't prove it. Now this is the main point of the things we are saying.

We have such a high priest who is seated at the right hand the author of Hebrews says our great

high priest Jesus Christ is seated at the right hand of the throne of the majesty in the heavens. He is a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected. That's the true tabernacle in heaven.

So here's my question for you. If Jesus Christ as the first born from the dead the first human being to be resurrected for eternal life has been raised far above all entities and powers and is seated at the right hand of the father the right hand of the majesty on high then what does it mean when we say Christ in you? Obviously it's not going to be His physical presence is it? His physical presence is at the right hand of His father waiting until His enemies are made a footstool for His feet until the time when He is going to return. Jesus told us His physical presence would not be here on the earth.

He told His disciples in the upper room remember John 14 I am going away I will send you another comforter He will be with you He will lead you into all truth He will speak the things that I have been speaking I'm going away He will speak in my place Jesus told the disciples when He commissioned them as apostles I'm going away I've commanded you because I'm not going to be here to do it so the personal presence of Jesus Christ is not in you when it says Christ in you so that answers the question am I supposed to feel another presence inside me is this someone I can talk to in my soul and have conversations with and expect to hear a voice or a guiding or some sort of a sensation that there is another presence inside me Christ in you so the personal presence of Jesus Christ is not a personal presence it doesn't my question and of course you know you get thrown out of seminary class if you ask really silly questions I would assume so I never tried it but if because there is a view and it's quite common that this is a personal indwelling of Jesus Christ that He's there and many seminaries are also very squared away biblically in saying that prayer is addressed to God the Father it would seem very odd to me to have Jesus Christ personally indwelling me and you'll forgive me but sort of riding around inside me but I don't ever talk to Him because prayer is addressed to the Father in the power of the Spirit in the name of the Son and pretty much everybody in Christendom acknowledges that it's not a personal presence Jesus Christ personally is seated at the right hand of the Father He is personally talking to God the Father we're told elsewhere in Scripture He makes intercession on our behalf He talks to the Father and He says Father you see Sam down there and he's messing up for the 555th time but as you recall the last time we had this discussion I died for Him He's in me He's a part of my body and my bride and my spirit and Jesus Christ has those conversations with God the Father about each one of us He intercedes on our behalf that's where His personal presence that's where His conversations are taking place is with His Father so that leaves us with the question what is then the meaning of the indwelling of Jesus Christ Christ in you the hope of glory we have many passages that talk about Christ in you and there's a lot to say about Christ in you and one of the things we see when we go through these is Romans and 2 Corinthians Romans and 2 Corinthians have a real high frequency of these phrases in Christ or Christ in you and as you go through if you do a concordance study you can do this with a computer and look for a phrase and there's just dozens of them and one of the things you notice is that these things

are true other times it says because Christ is in you these things are true and you get the idea that is reflected in Jesus' prayer in John chapter 15 I reviewed that a little bit last week and you remember when Jesus is praying to the Father and He says I am in them just as I am in you and you are in me it looks like everybody is in everybody else is also spoken of as almost interchangeable in that regard and the reason that's true and the reason those terms are sort of interchangeable is that we're not talking about personal presence especially in the case of the Father and of the Son we're talking about a different kind of presence and that's what we want to nail down so we're going to pause and take our break and when we come back we're going to look at if we looked at everyone we'd be here for three weeks but we're going to look at some significant passages that talk about Christ in us what does the scripture say in that context what is the result what should our experience be what should we notice if Christ is in fact in us what does that mean in practical terms is it just a theological way of saying you're a Christian and we just go on or is there a significance that we should be aware of that's what we'll cover when we come back